

JAGADGURUVANI

ANUGRAHABASHANAS OF
Sri Sri Sri Bharati Teerdha Mahaswamiji

VOLUME I



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Anugraha Bhashanam delivered by H. H. at HYDERABAD under the auspices of the Hindu Dharma Prachar Parishat.

All of us belong to a tradition which has been following an illustrious and glorious dharmic way of living. That tradition is "Bharatheeya Religious Philosophy". Its actual name is Sanatana Dharma (a dharma which has no beginning and has no end). This religious philosophy and disciplined way of living has no parallel anywhere in the world. How has this religion and practice attained such immeasurable heights? What are its unique features? Let us examine this now.

We have been believing and practising certain basic principles, as part of our religion from time immemorial.

They are three in number : One; unshakable faith in the existence of God; two : Theory of Rebirth and three : a firm belief that vedas are the sole spiritual guide to declare what is right conduct and what is not. We have been believing and adhering to these three basic concepts, all along. These three are the three firm pillars on which the edifice of our dharma is built. It is due to these basic truths that our culture and our dharma has withstood every onslaught which tried to shake this structure. It has stood with its head high above all and second to none.

Some people often ask "Swamiji, you have been, perhaps, noticing the way of living and neglect of our basic dharma by present generation of people. If this path is continued, do you think our Hindu dharma will last long?" We replied, "As long as humanity lives, our sanatana dharma will flourish. No doubt about that." They query "Sir, how are you so confident?" My answer was "Look at history and my conviction will be clear to you". History tells us that there were many, many attempts to strangle our sanatana dharma; but this glorious religion has withstood such onslaughts. Not one such attempt to dislodge our religion has ever succeeded. Sanatana Dharma remains with its head high even today. One may ask "You said Hindu religion earlier; now, you are speaking of sanatana dharma." The reply is "Our religion, our dharma, should be called as sanatana dharma only. The name Hindu Dharma came somewhere in between. The name is sanatana dharma

from time immemorial. You come across Sanatana Dharmis in North India. They use the terms "Sanatana Dharma, Sanatana Dharma Sabha" etc. even today.

We had mentioned the three basic concepts on which our sanatana dharma is founded (ie) Faith in God's existence Belief in the theory of rebirth (PUNARJANMA) and acceptance of vedas as our Fundamental Scriptures. These three concepts are ingrained in our blood. We believe that God is Omnipotent. That he is the Originator, Preserver and Destroyer (Srishti, Stithi and Laya) of this universe. He is the dispenser of justice by way of reward for Good and penalty for Evil. He looks after our welfare at all times. These are our conceptions about God. His power is unimaginable and immeasurable. Unimaginable, because it is beyond our power of imagination. Immeasurable, because it has no limits—boundless. Because of such omnipotence and omnipresence, we believe in and pray to God always. We have no words to praise His Glory.

Another Question which is often asked is "How many Gods are there in our Dharma?" Please take it from me. There is one and only one God. Several Gods do not exist. That one and supreme God is called and worshipped by various names; Lord Venkateswara at Tirupathi, Lord Visveshwara at Kashi. The same Easwara as Lord Mallikarjuna at Srisaillam, as Mahakaleswara at Ujjain etc. The names are different but supreme force (Chaitanya) is the same. In this respect, my revered Guru used to give an interesting explanation. Maha Vishnu is called "VASUDEVA", Parama Shiva (Easwara) is called "VAMADEVA" the only difference between the two is, therefore, "SU" and "MA" which when joined together becomes "SUMA" = a flower.

Another distinction is : One is worshipped with "TULASI" leaves while the other is worshipped with "BILVA" leaves. The benediction given by both Siva and Vishnu is the same. No difference. If one were to worship God, keeping this non-distinction in view, there is no doubt that, one will attain full results of his dhyana, his japa and his worship

Coming to the life source (JEEVA) in living beings, the Jeeva is without a beginning and without an end. It has neither birth nor death. It does not age, it exists forever. The Lord has said in Bhagavatgeetha :-

“न जायते म्रियतेवा कदाचित्”

Meaning thereby that the soul (Jeeva) has no birth nor death. One may ask then, how do you say that one is born or one is dead.

It can be explained as follows : If the soul (Jeeva) enters a body, the body starts living. When the Jeeva leaves it, the body is dead. The same jeeva enters another body to make it live and we say “One is born”, It is the body that starts living and it is the body which ceases to exist. The relationship between the body and soul is described by Lord Krishna, as

“वासामि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोपराणि तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही”

We put on clothes and wear them for sometime. If they become old and torn out, we discard them and put on new clothes. When these clothes also get worn out and torn, we remove them again and take up new clothes. Clothes may be various and different; but body is the same. Just in the same way, bodies may be different, but the living spirit (soul or Jeeva, as we call it) is the same. Soul is formless, emotionless without attributes and unattached to action (Nishkriya).

If the soul is without birth or death, without attachments, without emotion and without attributes, then what is moksha? (merger of the “atma” – soul with “Paramatma” – the eternal) Is it a third one after birth and death? Is it something separate and new to come afterwards? No. Realisation of Existence, Realisation of the Supreme Truth is Moksha. This may look perplexing and complex. Let me explain it. We speak of the birthlessness and deathlessness and permanence of the soul and that Body and soul are different from each other. This concept remains as a thought only with us. We do not put this into practice. We merge the “Body” with the “Soul” and call ourselves “I”. When you ask some one “who are you” He will describe his body, his height, his complexion, his weight etc. What are these attributes of height, weight and colour relating to? They describe the present body; not the soul. But when we say “I”, we only describe the body and not the soul. But we behave as if that “I” is the body and nothing else. The moment we attain the stage when we perceive the body as different from “I” (ie) the real Jeeva (soul), then

we have attained moksha. All our efforts are directed towards achievement of this goal. But we have to agree that this effort and attainment of the goal is not easy for the common man. Why? Because this conceptual pluralisation of Body and Soul is being carried forward by us from various births; from one birth to the other. This is just not today or yesterday, but from several births.

It is common knowledge that any habit acquired by us right from birth cannot be changed so easily. This is a natural weakness of human beings. If this is true of one birth (or one life), then what about a habit (Samskara) that is being carried forward from birth to birth, since a long, long time? It is not at all easy to discard that concept. One may deliver longwinding speeches, write books and so on. When it comes to putting theory into practice, they fail. They also behave like normal human beings. They keep "Precept and Practice" separate. But if one succeeds in cultivating the practice and attains that stage where one considers the Body and the Soul as separate entities—not merely in belief but in reality—then, he has reached the stage of "Moksha" (deliverance of Atma into Paramatma)—One should consider himself and act as the limitless, formless Jeeva.

It is said in the scriptures that "One may not be afraid of any one, anything; but he is certainly afraid of one thing and cannot escape from its clutches. That is Mrityu (death). One may say he is fearless; he can fearlessly go into a forest infested with wild life, he can easily do that, do this etc. But when it comes to death he opens up his hands and says "If only death does not strike me, I can achieve every conceivable thing" But alas! Death does not spare anyone. It strikes everyone without fear or favour.

ये ना चांता स्सलिल निधयः येन सृष्टा प्रतिग्रोः शस्त्राण्यस्त्राण्यापि कबलिता न्येकया
यस्य यष्टया तस्माद्भुक्षः प्रभवति जनो देव भूदेव वर्गे कालः कीटानिव कबलयामा सता नप्ययत्नम्

There have been great personages in this world. Great sages like Agasthya, Viswamitra, Vasishta, Bharadwaja—persons of unparalleled eminence, holiness and greatness—whose greatness, we cannot even estimate—Where are they today? They merged into the Eternal Sea of Death. Death is a great leveller. Big and small, good and bad, young

and old – are all equal before It. One may ask “will death strike respectable persons like us?” Yes, it will. Even great Emperors, sages and saints have not been spared.

उदुंबर फलानीव ब्रह्मांडान्यत्तिय स्तदा सर्व गर्वापहः कालः तस्य के मशकावयम्

Time consumes the entire universe just as udumbar (FIGS) fruits are eaten away. In comparison, we are only mosquitoes. This is the reason why everyone fears “death”. But do you think Death will spare you because you are afraid of it and beg its pardon? Your opponent in fight may leave you, if you raise your hands and ask for pardon. But Death is not like that. You may pray; you may cry; you may worship. But it wont spare you

मृत्योर्भि भीत किं मूढ भीतम् मुच्यति किं यमः

Death does not spare you even if you fear it very much. “Then, whom does the Death God spare”, one may ask. “I am eager to know that. So that I can propitiate that God and avoid death”.

“अजातम् नैव गृह्णाति कुरु यत्न मजन्मनि ”

Meaning : Death does not strike that one, who considers Soul and Body as separate. As long as you consider your Body as everything and does not believe in the concept of Soul, Death is inevitable. Then, What should we do? Our actions should be directed to avoid rebirth. अजातं नैव गृह्णाति कुरु यत्न मजन्मनि. Only course open to us is to strive for avoiding entering into another body, at least in future. This advice has been dinned in to our ears by our predecessors “Oh Boy, strive for Janmarahitya (avoiding another birth)”. We get liberation (Mukti) only when the soul does not enter in to another body. Otherwise, we have to suffer this cycle of Births and Deaths. Our ancients have given considerable thought to this issue. They did not waste their time in analysing material things.

Our great sages have done great thinking to find the Truth, Absolute Truth about self (आत्म तत्त्वम्). An example of this line of thinking can be found in the story of Nachiketa, which has been told in the Kathopanishat. Yama, the God of Death gave darshan

to Nachiketa and ordained him to ask for a boon. Nachiketa said "Oh Lord, I do not seek any material pleasures. I am far away from them". I wonder what pleasures and treasures, we would have asked for, if the same choice was given to us. But Nachiketa was not like that. He was a great seeker of Eternal Truth. He asked Yama

“येनं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्येऽस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीतिचैके एतद् विद्या मनुशिष्टस्त्वयाहं वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः”.

I have no taste for worldly pleasures. I am seeking the eternal truth (truth about the self). What happens to "Life" (Jeeva) after death? Does he continue to live? Some say that there is no life after death. Some say that there is. Which is true? One group is Non-Believers (Nastikas). The other is Believers (Astikas). The astikas claim that there is life after death (Re-Birth), while the nastikas say "Nonsense. There is nothing like that. The body, after death, becomes ash and that is the final fate of this body."

“मस्मी भूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनं कुतः यावज्जीवं सुखम् जीवेत् ऋणं कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत्”

"My Dear friends, everything is over after this body dies and is burnt. Therefore enjoy yourself. Make hay while sun shines. Forget about what happens when you are no more. Bother about this life, yourself and your pleasures". The astikas sing a different tune. "Friends, don't think that death is the end of your existence. Your soul lives. It has no birth or death. Depending upon your good or evil actions, you will take a new birth again—a different body. Good actions beget good life and evil actions: evil life" Yama replies "My dear boy, I condemn the views of these Non-Believers. There is a soul which is eternal."

येनिमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः स्थाणुमन्येऽनुसंयन्ति यथा कर्म यथा श्रुतम्

What the Astikas say is true. Believe it and follow it. After your death, you will have to assume another form, which will be a form suitable to the consequences of your good and evil deeds in this life.

Great men of our land have bestowed much thought on this concept of "Punarjanma" (Rebirth). There is a lot of literature on that. Still, the modern man says 'we can't believe it all because: We are not blind believers. Do not expect us to believe it as Gospel Truth, merely because you are saying it. If that is the only reason, then we cannot accept that. We won't accept anything, which we have ourselves not seen and heard.' Our ancients have already replied this "Listen; you are now in a dilemma. What is that? whether there is life after death or not. Some say there is rebirth, some say no. If there is no nether world (परलोकम्) then all your effort is wasted. Why bother about something which is not there? Which is a myth. On the other hand, if there is a nether world (परलोकम्) then one needs Bhakti, temples, worship and God etc. Only then, all the trouble is worth taking. I am, therefore, in a fix as to what to do. Kindly advise". But our reply is, "there is no room for any doubt on this issue. The issue has already been clearly decided and established. But since you are in doubt, I wish to advise you to take a safer path. Even if you believe that there is no other world after death, perform all your actions on the belief that there is a Nether world. That is safer and better for you." You may retort then, "I shall proceed on the assumption that there is no Nether world. Is that not possible according to your logic? You say proceed on the basis of Existence of Nether world. Why not proceed on the basis of that world not existing?" The reply has been already given by our ancient thinkers, in a fine manner :-

संदिग्धेऽपि परे लोके कर्तव्यो धर्म एव हि नास्ति चेन्नास्ति नो हानिः अस्ति चेन्नास्तिको हतः

Even if you are in doubt about the nether world, it is better for you to assume that it exists and perform good deeds. This course is safer either way, because, you have nothing to lose if nether world is not there. But if it is there, the non-believer is sure to be punished. Why take that risk? They have amplified this advice by giving a common example. Two persons walking on the path encounter a serpent-hill. One stops and says, "There must be a snake in it" Another says, "No there cannot be a snake there" A third person listening to them, falls into a dilemma. "Should I go or should I stop? which is true; whether snake is there or not there? what is the best course of action?" A wise man, standing near-by

advises them: "My dear boys, Avoid that hill; take a detour and go by the side. Do not bother to decide whether snake is there or not. Safest course is to by-pass." In a similar way, do not waste time on a purpose-less discussion about existence or non-existence of the other world. Proceed and be safe on the basis that it really exists. The non-believer will suffer un-told misery. Therefore, live a virtuous life. Perform your dharma. This is what our sages have taught us.

An interesting story comes to my mind. A certain non-believer spoke on the subject of non-existence of God for a good length of time. He spoke well and in a very convincing manner. An elderly person from the audience, greeted him after the lecture and complimented him for his great scholarship and oratory powers. The speaker thanked him with folded hands and remarked "It is all God's will. We are nothing before him". The moral of the story is that a firm belief in God is in-born in all of us. The contradictory theories are acquired later; By force, or fashion or as a hobby. Naturally what is in-born is firm and ever-lasting, while, what is acquired in between has to fade away. Therefore, do believe in what your own fathers, grand fathers and great grand fathers have taught and ingrained into you. Don't be swept away by mischievous notions and advices.

Therefore, we must have, as much firm faith in the concept of Rebirth as in that of the Existence of God. Both are complementary to each other.

Every thing born in Nature must have a cause. Even modern scientists will agree on this. Similarly every effect must have a cause. This is called, "the cause and effect theory". Therefore, if we are facing difficulties and suffering sorrows to-day, there must have been a reason for this. Certainly there should have been. It is this "cause" for the "Effect" that our fore-fathers called as "SIN" or evil deeds. Similarly, for our luxuries and happiness of today, our virtue and good deeds of past birth must be the cause. The upanishat speaks of this as

पुण्योहवै पुण्येन कर्मणा भवति; पापः पापेन

Good deeds beget happiness; Evil deeds beget sorrow. Therefore, there cannot be any controversy about this theory of Re-birth.

Now, about the third concept. How and who shall decide which is virtue (Punya) and which is evil (Papam). It is interesting to note that evil is called Sin in English language, there is no equivalent for virtue (Opposite of Sin). What you think to be good or virtuous, is it dharma? what you hate or dislike, is it adharma? Is that the definition? There is a big objection to this. If you think you are very wise and intelligent to decide what is dharma and what is adharma, a still wiser and more intelligent person may emerge and condemn your decision. And so on. There will be no limit. Utter confusion will be the result. Therefore, the ancient sages and hermits advised that Veda should be the authority on Dharma & Adharma. No other source shall have that authority. Sankara has said

वक्तव्यार्थश्च विचार्यताम् श्रुति शिरः पक्ष स्तमाः श्रीयताम् दुस्तर्कास्तु विरम्यताम्
श्रुतिमतस्तर्कोनु संधीयताम्

Exercise all your skill, apply all your intelligence, debate well; but the final answer should be what the Vedas have ordained. Your abilities should be to strengthen their force; not to contradict. Avoid baseless and purposeless arguments. If you proceed on this correct path, you will flourish and happiness will be yours. Otherwise, you will suffer misery and go to Hell. Sankara is the greatest thinker, philosopher and theoretician of all times. The world has not seen a better such person. This is the accepted acclaim, even from the western thinkers.

The same Theory has been expounded by Manu, the great Law Maker of ancient times.

श्रुतिस्तु वेदो विज्ञेयः धर्मं शास्त्रंतु वै स्मृतिः ते सर्वार्थेष्वमीमांसे ताभ्याम् धर्मोहि
निर्वर्तौ.

The Vedas (Srutis) are the eternal source for our knowledge of dharma and adharma. If we deride that knowledge or suspect those thoughts, we shall be committing the greatest sin. It is equivalent to defaming your teacher, after learning all his teachings. Decrying the Guru, who taught you, is the greatest sacrilege.

To sum up. The ancients have bequeathed to us three great precepts. Firm belief in the existence of God Almighty; Theory of Rebirth and pre-eminent authority of the Vedas in matters of dharma. These are our

valuable heritage and we have been wedded to these values from time immemorial. It is because of these age-less truths that our Sanatana Dharma is standing aloft even today. No amount of onslaughts and obstacles, could shake this tower of greatness. These truths are as much useful today, as they were when they were first enunciated.

Every one takes solace in God when he is confronted with difficulties or he falls in to sorrow. There can be no exception in this. Had this ultimate solace of God been not there, man would have had no way of facing his sorrow with equanimity. It is God who gives him strength to face the sorrow. This is the message of our Sages, our scriptures. If we do not adopt this path, then we are committing the greatest contempt of our elders and ancients.

There is no greater crime than that. Everyone is proud of his ancestors, his fore-fathers. That they led virtuous lives, that they struggled for upholding the right of dharma in the land. Should we not follow them ? Should we not be genuine successors to them ? There is a saying :-

येनास्य पितरो याता येन याता : पितामहा : तेन यायात् सताम् वर्त्म तेन गच्छन् नदुष्यति.

The path shown by your ancestors should be the leading light for you. If you go on that path, you reach your goal. Be that your aim in life and be virtuous.

Science has very much advanced. Knowledge has grown breaking all barriers. But so far, no one could shake the eternal truth contained in the three concepts, we have explained before. They can never be changed, even in future. They are on firm foundation, based on eternal values. It is to uphold and propagate these values that great Avatars like Krishna and Rama have taken birth in this land. Great Sage Sankara has come into this world for the same purpose. Let us follow the path shown by them and also lead others onto the same path. Then only, there is a meaning and purpose for our existence : Then only, we will go into better and greater lives. **May God Bless you all.**

29-10-92

HYDERABAD

One of the main tenets of our culture is firm belief in the existence of God. The entire universe is His creation and He alone maintains it. Finally it is in Him that it merges at the time of dissolution. He is the dispenser of happiness and sorrow to human beings, according to their good or evil conduct. Not even a blade of grass grows without his approval. These principles form the basic foundation of our Religion. Based on these principles, human life is going on. If one does not accept these tenets, he can hardly be classified as a human being.

Often, a question is raised as to how many Gods do we have. The one whom we call God Almighty, is he one or many? Many a time I am asked as to which God one should worship and which God to disregard; which God can be pleased and which God will be annoyed if another is worshipped; So on and so forth. The reality is our Religion has only one God. We may call him Paramatma, Eashwar etc. The upanishad declares :-

एको देवः सर्वं भूतेषु गूढः सर्वं व्यापी सर्वं भूतान्तरात्मा कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वं भूताधिवासः साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च.

Therefore, there cannot be any unnecessary controversy over multiplicity of Gods. God is one.

The next question is: How then, have the different Gods Rama, Krishna, Ganapati, Devi, etc. came into being. The reply is: They are different names for the same God. Names differ, but the life substance, vibrations (chaitanya) is the same. Sankara Bhagavatpada has said :-

स्यात् परमेस्वरस्यापि इच्छा वशान्मायामयम् रूपम् साधकानुग्रहार्थम्

The One God manifests Himself into several forms with a view to bless the people according to their desires. The same life force exists in all the different forms of the God. To propagate this one-ness of God, he assumes the form of Vishnu some times and Siva at other times (Hari and Hara).

Our ancient poets have never shown even an iota of discrimination between Hara and Hari. Their attitude is summarised in the following sloka :-

वस्ताम् पिशंगम् वसनम् दिशोवा गरुत्मतायातु ककुभ्रतावा निद्रातुवा नृत्यतुवाचिरंगम्,
भेदो न मेस्यात् परमस्य धाम्नः :

One (Hari) wears emerald coloured dress; the other (Hara) is naked (the eight directions form enveloping dress); one rides the Garuda, the other rides the Ox; one sleeps on the Great ocean of milk the other dances over the universe. We don't perceive any difference in the life-force vibrating through them (chaitanya). Similarly

मुर मधनम्, पुर मधनम्, कणधर तल्पम्, कणाधरा कल्पम्, मारमण सुमारमणम्, वंदे बाणारि मसमबाणारिम्.

One (Hari) destroyed the demon Mura; the other (Hara) destroyed the demon Pura; one sleeps on the Great snake (Adishesha); the other has snakes round his neck; one is the husband of Ma (Lakshmi); the other is the husband of Uma; one killed the Rakshas Bana; the other killed Asama Bana, (Meaning five arrowed God, Manmatha). We do not discriminate between the two.

There is an ancient text book called "Karma Vipakam" which enumerates in great detail the evils which man commits in one birth and the consequences of that evil, which he has to suffer in the next birth. The author traces every suffering of today, to a sin committed earlier.

यो वदन् विष्णु रुद्राणाम् भेदमुत्तम भावतः साधयेत् उदर व्याधि युक्तो भवति मानवः :

He says : One who practices discrimination between Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and propagates such a theory, is destined to suffer from abdominal ulcer. This is not something invented and taught by me; but something laid down in the text hundreds of years ago. The very thought of such discrimination is abhorrible. It is the same God—Vibrations and Eternal force which exists in God, by whatever name He is called. Logicians have narrated :-

एकस्य कस्यचिदशेष जगत् प्रसूति हेतोः अनादि पुरुषस्य महा विभूते सृष्टि, स्थिति प्रलय, कार्य विभागयोगात्, ब्रह्मेति, विष्णुरिति, रुद्र इति प्रतीतिः :

The same Godly spirit manifests itself as Brahma at the time of creation of the universe; the same manifests itself as Vishnu for preservation and maintenance and as Rudra at the time of dissolution of the Worlds.

न जायते म्रियतेवा कदाचित् नायम् भूत्वा भविता या न भूया : (Geeta)

That which has no birth or death, has no manifestations of disease; ageing or suffering and that which is Almighty, Omnipotent and Omnipresent—That ultimate reality is that which creates itself and takes the forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, for the three universal functions mentioned earlier. But in substance and spirit the Universal Force is one and the same.

The uniqueness of the one and only Paramatma is described in this sloka :-

तत्रेश्वर सर्वज्ञः परमात्मा एक एव

He is all knowing, all pervading—but only one. Study of the epics and puranas teach us this great truth. We should, therefore, never discard this faith.

When we speak of Puranas, some one may ask; How is it then, that while Siva Purana extols the virtue of Siva only and says no other God is greater than him, the Vishnu Purana does the same about Vishnu; the Soura Purana does the same about Sun God. How do you solve this controversy? We cannot say any one of those puranas is incorrect. Because :-

अष्टादश पुराणानाम् कर्ता सत्यवती सुतः

All the eighteen Puranas are written by one and the same Veda Vyasa. Was he out of mind? The root of the doubt is that one particular purana speaks of that God to which it is dedicated and acclaims that Tatva. We have to view this, applying a law which is called as न हि निंदा न्यायम्, which says

न हि निंदा निन्दितम् प्रवृत्ताऽपि स्तुत्यम् स्तोतुम्

It declares that “When we speak about and praise a certain person to the skies and say that no one is equal to him, it only refers to the greatness of that person: it does not mean that others are no good” If we apply this Rule and read the Puranas, we will find no controversy. There can be no question of One God being greater than

another, because we have established earlier that there are no several Gods. God is one. Names are many. Our entire scriptures, Puranas and other literature have emphasised this aspect only. This is what is called **ADVAITA**. No one should, therefore, ever attempt to practice or propogate Dualism (i. e.) Vishnu is greater than Siva or vice versa.

You all know well that we celebrate Sri Rama Navami, Gokulashtami and Maha Sivaratri—all with equal fervour, devotion and enthusiasm. It is because we do not discriminate one form of God from another.

I, therefore, appeal to all of you to develop and practice this Advaita vision of God. Never discriminate. Never deery the name of one God, in favour of praising another God. Siva—Kesava Abhedha drishti (Looking at Siva and Kesava with equanimity) is the lesson which we should never forget.

18-11-92

KHAMMAM

The Vedas declare :-

धर्मो विश्वस्य जगतः प्रतिष्ठा

The entire movement and life of this universe is running because of **DHARMA**. If Dharma is not practised, there will be chaos and destruction. Dharma, well practised, preserves mankind and leads it to prosperity. This is what is contained in that great saying. Manu, the greatest of the authors of Smritis, in his Manu Smriti says :-

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति, धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः

तस्मात् धर्मो न हंतव्यः मानो धर्मो हतो वर्णीत्

He declares that : If we preserve, protect and practice Dharma, Dharma will like-wise protect and give you happiness; If we discard and murder dharma, it will likewise devour you and give you greatest misery and suffering. One should, therefore, lead a dharmic way of living.

Before we proceed to analyse what is preserving dharma and what is discarding dharma, we should understand basically, as to what is Dharma.

We should know what is Dharma, what its form and substance is, what its attributes and qualities are. The ancients have answered this in :-

वेदेन प्रयोजन मुद्दिश्य विधीय मानो अर्थो धर्मः

By the practice of which, one begets happiness and that which has been ordained by the Vedas to be such, is Dharma. The sole authority for classifying and specifying what is dharma and what is not, is Vedas. No other Book or person has got that authority. This is the basic tenet of our Sanatana Dharma.

No one, however learned and intelligent he may be, can arrogate to himself the authority of declaring what is dharma and what is not. Because we should remember that there is always another more learned and more intelligent person, who will condemn that person. This cycle will go on. Therefore, if the authority of deciding the form of dharma is left to individuals, there will be lot of confusion and chaos. No one will listen to the other. Each will become master of himself. The ancient seers foresaw this and ordained that Veda should be the ultimate authority and no other.

वेदोऽखिलो धर्म मूलम् स्मृति शैलि च तद्विदाम्

The Group of vedas is the source for Dharma; sole authority for Dharma. The Smritis, which have followed the Vedas, which are compiled according to the teachings of the Vedas, should be the next source for ascertaining the true nature of Dharma. After the four vedas, great Rishis like Manu, Yagnyavalkya and Parasara (मनु, याज्ञवल्क्य, पराशर) have compiled Smritis, each of which is respectively named after them. These Smritis contain in a condensed form the essence of the Vedas. They are meant to reduce the burden of the ordinary student, since no one has the capacity to study all the Vedas. An interesting story is narrated, in the Taittireeya Samhita in this connection :-

Bharadwaja, a great Rishi, studied Veda deeply but could not complete the work in his life time. He took another birth and continued the good work, but again failed to complete. He started a third life journey; continued study, lying down, because he was so weak even to sit. He suffered great pain. At that time, Lord Indra appeared before him and told him "My dear Man, Look at these three great mountains". Saying so, he picked up one handful of earth from each mountain and pointed out to Bharadwaja "what you have so far mastered is these three handfuls out of the mountains. What you have to still master is of the size of those mountains. No one can achieve this : I shall, therefore, teach you a simpler and subtler way of mastering the Knowledge of the self (Atma Tattva).

अनंता वै वेदाः ए तद्वा एतै स्त्रिमिरायुमिरन्ववोचथा : . अथ त इतर दनन्तमेव

Vedas are unlimited. It is, therefore, impossible for anyone to completely study them. The great sages have kindly understood this and bestowed on us the great wisdom of the Vedas, in a comprehensive, condensed and summarised form, in the shape of the Smritis. These Smritis are, therefore, no less authoritative than the Vedas.

Whatever the Vedas teach, the Smritis teach in a condensed form. Nothing different. Kalidasa, the great poet, emphasised this closeness between Srutis (Vedas) and Smritis in a beautiful verse :-

मार्गम् मनुष्येभ्यश्च धर्मपत्नी श्रुतेरिवार्थम् स्मृतिरज्ञगच्छत्

Maharaja Dilip was accompanying the sacred cow Nandini. Sudakshana, the queen, was closely following in the foot steps of King Dilip. This close following appeared to the great poet as being so accurate and close, as that of Smritis following the Srutis.

One may ask : Now-a-days we see students completing the study of Vedas in five or six years. How do you say that it is an impossible task to master Vedas. What we now find, as the mastery of Veda is the study of only one branch out of the hundred branches of Yajurveda, which is again one out of the four Vedas.

Let us remember, therefore, that Vedas are the sole declaratory authority to decide what is dharma. We may next follow the Smritis. Whatever they have ordained to be in our interest, whatever code of conduct they have prescribed is Dharma.

What does preservation and protection of Dharma mean? Practice of the code of conduct taught by the Vedas and Smritis scrupulously is "Protection of Dharma". Mere rituals and performing the actions ordained by the scriptures in a routine manner, without concentration and sincerity of purpose, is a total waste. Sincerity and devotion are the hall marks of Dharma. It is no use complaining that the desired results have not followed, even after regularly and religiously performing all the actions. Those actions must be done with extreme devotion and sincerity (भक्ति, श्रद्धा). The Bhagavadgita says :-

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् असदिच्युते पार्थ न च तत् प्रेत्यनो इह

Whatever and how - so - many Japas, Tapas, Homas and yagas you perform - if they are performed with lack of devotion, sincerity and concentration, they will not give you any benefit either in this world or in the other world. श्रद्धा is the most important element. Sankara has also said

वेदो नित्यमधीयताम् तदुदितम् कर्म स्वनुष्ठीयताम्

stressing the value and importance of devotion. He has explained what is 'devotion' in the following Verse :-

शास्त्रस्य गुरुवाक्यस्य सत्यं बुध्वावधारणा साश्रद्धा कथिता सद्भिः यया वस्तूपलभ्यते

"Sastras have ordained like this. If I scrupulously follow that path, happiness will result" - This should be your firm belief while performing your action. There should not be any trace of doubt. Firm Belief begets the result. "I have been told to do so. So I have done it. I am not sure about the result". This type of attitude is condemnable and worst. We should avoid such an attitude and develop extreme devotion and sincerity towards the practice of Dharma.

An interesting incident comes to mind in this connection. Before Sankara's birth, his parents performed severe penance for begetting a child. Though this went on for a long time, their wish was not fulfilled. Siva Guru, the father, became desperate and cursed himself. Aryamba, the mother, consoled her husband, saying.

नो देवतासु जडिमा ; जडिमा मनुष्ये,

There is nothing wrong with the dispensation of God. If at all there is a mistake, it is with us. Our penance and prayers are perhaps, not enough; devotion is perhaps, less. So let us continue with more perseverance and devotion to God. The desired result came. Lord Eashwara was himself born as their Child. Therefore, dharma, practised scrupulously with sincerity, concentration and devotion, does bring the desired result.

Many people are worried about not being able to keep their mind still during their Japa or Pooja. They often tell me "Though on some other occasions we are able to concentrate, the moment we sit for Pooja or Japa, the mind starts wandering. How to control and maintain it still?" My reply is "There is no other way, than to practise. Practice makes the man perfect, is an old saying. Bhagavan has said in the Gita

अचंचलम् महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहम् चलम् अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय, वैराग्येन च मुह्यते

If we are enjoying any happiness in this birth, it is certainly due to our past virtuous actions; all the sorrow is, like wise, the result of past sins.

पुण्यो ह वै पुण्येन कर्मणा भवति ; पाप : पापेन

Virtue begets happiness; while evil begets sorrow. There is no escape from this.

Many a person, we find, accuses God of inaction for the difficulties and sorrow he is experiencing. How can a merciful God keep quiet while his devotee is suffering? When you are paying the price of your own past sins, what is the use of accusing God, who neither favours nor hates any one.

“न मे राग द्वेषौ” : I don't patronise nor do I hate. The sastras say :-
 प्राकृत भोगावसरे ताम्रसि चेतो मुधा कुतो हेतोः । न्यग्रोध बीजं मुप्त्वा शोचन्निव
 नाम्न मस्येति

A certain person desired to have mangoes. He sowed seeds of a pipal tree. The seeds grew fast and a mighty pipal tree, with roots growing downwards came up. He could not find any mangoes on it. So they say, what is the use of repenting, when mangoes have not come up, when what you sown really are pipal and not mango seeds. Like wise, God dispenses justice, like a Judge, based upon your actions of the previous birth. A Judge convicts you for the crime committed. He goes by the Law Book, which prescribes which punishment is to be given, to which crime. When the Judge has acted according to that Law, how can you blame the merciful and bountiful God when, according to the Law of Dharma, he has to give you sorrow, for the sins of your previous birth. If you are wise, you should have avoided committing the crime. Any way, you have to suffer for the past sins. At least, wake up now and practice virtue and ensure happiness in the next birth. Wisdom lies in this course of action.

We have seen what is protection of Dharma. Now discarding or Killing of Dharma means neglecting to practice virtue, omitting to have good conduct. Dharma punishes you for this, by giving you sorrow, pain and difficulties. One should remember this and scrupulously follow the great traditions of Dharma established by our fore-fathers. One should perform his own ordained duty. His own duty, even if it is lowly and mean, should be properly practised and is better than an alien dharma, well practised. This is codified by Bhagavan in the Geeta :-

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् स्वधर्मे निधनम् श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः

One's own duty, well - performed is the highest form of practising dharma. Now - a - days people go berserk and ask “Why I should do this work only; why can't I do that. What is great about him that he only should do that work. I can perform that task equally well”. Let us imagine as to what will happen if an Engineer goes to the Court and argues; a Lawyer constructs a building or a doctor appears in court. The client will lose the case and the building will collapse. One can achieve expertise in his own field of action. Therefore, one should not

consider his own duty, as something less or mean. It is sacred and great, as far as he is concerned. Imagine what would happen to mankind, if the scavengers think their work to be mean and stop doing their duty every-where.

Do practice, preserve and honour Dharma. Do your own specified, sacred duty. Do not even think of evil. Know definitively that evil begets sorrow and there is no escape from it. Whoever follows this ancient and valuable advice, shall prosper. No doubt about it. Whoever acts otherwise, whoever boasts that he knows everything, that he need not listen to anyone's advice, what he thinks good is the only virtue—such a person, has only to be classified as an animal. Because, it is animals, who have no moral code, no conventions and no elders to advise. Let us belong to the first category and not to the second. Let us uphold the saying जंतूनां नर जन्म दुर्लभम्. Of all living beings, man is highly evolved. To be born a human, is the result of past virtue. Let us, therefore, be proud of this birth, practice virtue, abhor evil and make the life worth living and ensure a better life in the next birth. My blessings to you all.

22-11-92

DWARKA TIRUMALA

We have heard of "Illusion", but what about "Elongated Illusion" दीर्घ भ्रान्ति. One may ask, is there anything like a prolonged illusion? Is it some thing which you have invented or does it really exist. My reply is "It is not my invention or my creation".

Let us think of a dream. One dreams that he takes an aeroplane, goes to Benares, have a dip in Ganga, worship Lord Visweswara and then proceed in the same plane to Rameswaram; have a dip in the Sea and worship Ramanatha Swami there; Return home and perform हस्तर्पण (feeding the people). It is possible that this dream is over in a few minutes, as part of a sleep of 4 or 5 hours. As long as the dream lasts, one feels that it is actually happening. The thought as to how one can traverse such long distances in such a short while, does not occur to that person. It is real as long as it lasts. But when he becomes

awake and is able to recall the dream, then he wonders about the impossibility of the happening. The "Illusion" makes one feel the impossible also to be "Real". Once the illusion is removed, reality dawns on the individual.

In a similar way, this life-journey is an "elongated illusion". If we can manage to break that illusion, unfold that माया, then the reality appears. The Veda says

यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत्केन कंपश्येत् केन कंजिघ्रेत्, केन कं विजानीयात्

The moment non-duality (अद्वैतम्) is realised, one feels that there is nothing else to see, nothing to hear. Everything ceases to exist for him, who has overcome the " Illusion ".

आत्मानं चेत् विजानीयादहमिस्मीति पूरुषः किमिच्छन् कस्य कामाय शरीरमनुसंज्वरेत्

There is no surprise in this. As long as the Illusion lasts, we live in accordance with the effects of that illusion.

" यथास्वप्ने " — Just as in the dream, the actions follow the illusion, life in this world also takes the course of the great illusion — dualistic illusion (द्वैत भ्रान्ति). But one does not perceive the distinction, because, this is an elongated illusion. In the dream, it lasts 4 or 5 hours, whereas here it is for a life time. Therefore, if one continues with the dual concept, he will be haunted with fear. He cannot attain salvation (मुक्ति). This concept, which is taught in a subtle manner by the Vedas, has been explained by Sankara in great detail.

The sole cause of our miseries is non-realisation (अज्ञानम्). Once this is eliminated, one sees reality (ब्रह्म साक्षात्कारम्). The true Brahma. Once this is realised, all miseries dissolve and eternal happiness and ultimate salvation will be achieved. The Vedantas have taught this lesson. Sankara tells us, aim of Vedanta Teaching, in the following words :-

अस्य अनर्थ हेतोः प्रहाणाय, आत्मैकत्वविद्या प्रतिपत्तये सर्वे वेदांता आरभ्यन्ते

One who has not reached the state of Non-dualism (अज्ञानि) suffers all the miseries, because अज्ञानम् is the root cause of these sorrows. The purpose of Vedanta is to redeem mankind from this misery and show man the path for salvation.

In his commentary on Veda Vyasa's Saririka Meemamsa (शारीरिक मीमांस), Acharya Sankara tells us :-

आत्मैक विद्या प्रतिपत्तये सर्वे वेदांता आरभ्यन्ते यथाचायमर्थः तथा वय मस्याम् शारीरिक मीमांसायाम् प्रदर्शयिष्यामः

“The aim of entire Vedanta is to teach us the path of Self-Realisation. I am going to explain those lessons in great detail in the Saririka Meemamsa”.

Acharya Sankara is no small personality. We worship Lord Krishna as an incarnation of God. It is because of his superhuman actions and perfect behaviour. Could any small boy hold a great mountain (गोवर्धन पर्वत) on his little finger? Could any infant kill such mighty demons, as Krishna did? We can recall any number of such performances which are narrated in the Maha Bhagawatham. It is because of this super human actions that we worship Krishna as God himself. Likewise Sankara in a short span of 32 years of life did miracles. No ordinary human being could have ever achieved, what Sankara did. Traversing from Kanya Kumari to Himalayas, when no transport was available; writing so many commentaries; composing so many stotras; encountering a large number of highly learned Scholars and Pundits and winning them over to his philosophy. All these cannot be the work of a human being. That is why we worship Adi Sankara, as an incarnation of Lord Siva.

His writings and stotras are impregnated with thoughts and teachings of the highest order in Advaita Philosophy. He had unshaken and irresistible faith in ADVAITA concept. Once, he was facing a large number of Pundits, during a Religious debate. They tickled him “Young man, we are so many about to pounce upon you, condemn your theories and defeat you. But you are the only one propagating this Advaita Theory”.

एतदेव मे स्वस्त्ययनम् यन्मामेक योगिनम् अनेक योगि बहु प्रतिपक्ष मास्य अतो जेष्यामि
सर्वान् आरभेच चिन्ताम्

This was Sankara's reply. "It does not bother me as to how many opponents, I am facing. My philosophy is so sound; my arguments are invincible, that it can effectively answer every one of your questions. It is only in this philosophy that you can find answers to all queries. This theory is true, eternal and irresistible. No one can shake this. That is why Lord Veda Vyasa has compiled the Sariraka Meemamsa. Above all, it is my good fortune that I am facing opposition from so many highly learned pundits. Let me have the divine opportunity of answering each one of you and convincing you. Let us start our debate."

The book on Sankara's life "शंकर विजयम्" by the great sage Madhava relates that Veda Vyasa remarked, after going through Sankara's commentary (भाष्यम्) on Vyasa's "शारीरक मीमांस" "I have seen so many commentaries on my book and there will certainly be so many more commentaries in future. But I can certainly vouch safe that none will be equal to Sankara's work. I am absolutely delighted with his commentary". This is Sankaracharya's greatness. To have obtained the praise and blessings of Veda Vyasa (who is none other than Lord Vishnu in human form) is no small matter. We should therefore, honour, study and assimilate Sankara's Teachings with sincere devotion and concentration.

There should be proper initiation and a systematic study under proper guidance, to thoroughly grasp this philosophy and apply it in practice. Otherwise, unnecessary and irrelevant doubts crop up and the objective cannot be achieved. That is the reason why Acharya Sankara said :-

असंप्रदायवित् सर्वशास्त्रविदपि मूर्खवदुपेक्षणीयः :

One may be very learned, but if the learning is not in the traditional manner, he should be ignored. There is no use in learning the meaning of slokas in a superficial manner. The correct interpretation, bringing out subtle meaning, treading the path shown by the elders,

following the commentaries of celebrated authors—these are the qualities for a person to master this philosophy. It is not enough if one masters the lexicography and studies Grammar to interpret the meaning of Veda Mantras. An anecdote comes to mind. A preacher was interpreting the meaning of :-

यानिशा सर्वं भूतानाम् तस्याम् जागर्ति संयमी
यस्याम् जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुने :

“ I have controlled myself. Therefore, when others are awake, I sleep and when others are sleeping, I will be awake.” This is the result of half baked knowledge. If the Preacher had studied Sankara's commentary on the Geeta, he would not have given such a silly interpretation. Therefore, it is essential that one masters the Commentaries of Sankara to understand and interpret Advaita Philosophy. No doubt, it needs great effort and deep study. But then only, one can know and propagate the true teachings of that great sage. Then only, one can make his living useful and happy. One should practice step by step, since the journey is long and tedious.

The Scriptures say

“ तमेतम् वेदानुवचनेन ब्राह्मणा विविदधन्ति यज्ञेन, दानेन, तपसा, अनाशकेन ”

Performing one's own duty religiously is the first, out of several steps. If one does not perform this basic function, there is no use of teaching principles of Dharma to him.

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात्
स्वधर्मे निधनम् श्रेयम् पर धर्मो भयावहः :

Remember this saying of Gita. No calling or profession is lowly or mean. Each one is great to himself. Your own duty, even if it doesn't pay you much, is laudable, than other's duty however much beneficial. This will help you in the long run and give you perfect happiness and success in life. Ultimately realisation of the Soul will result; without any doubt.

Some people ask me, "Swamiji, Tell us some method of reaching early Salvation. If there is such a method, I shall jump for it." I tell them "Brothers, there is no such quick trick. The journey is long and arduous. It needs Sincerity, concentration, devotion and regular, continuous practice. It is not something like a packet you can purchase in the market." Here also, the Gita proclaims :-

अनेक जन्म संसिद्धि : ततो याति परांगतिम्

If you start your journey on this path of virtue, you may reach the goal after several births of uninterrupted practice. One life - time is insufficient.

There can be no real devotion, if your mind is not clean (i.e.) you should be free from various vices that corrupt the mind. Such a person only can traverse this journey towards salvation. He should begin with dutiful performance of his own Dharma. स्वधर्मचरणम्. The ancients have beautifully explained the state of a disinterested person to whom vedanta is taught :-

आकौमारत् गुरुचरण शुश्रूषया ब्रह्म विद्यासु अस्थायास्थाम् अहह महतीम् अजितं
कौशल्यत् निद्रा हेतो निशिनिशि कथा : शृण्वताम् पार्थिवानाम् , कालक्षेपौपयिकमिदमपि आ :
कथं पर्शयसीत्

This is the lamentation of a Brahmachari, who spent several years of his teen age with the Guru and mastered Brahma Vidya. When he attempted preaching what he has learnt, during the late evenings, the audience was induced to good sleep. Because, they lacked interest and devotion towards God and Dharma.

So, begin to cleanse your conduct. When the mind is clean, you can perform your स्वधर्म effortlessly and with devotion. Continue your journey and success will certainly be yours. Learn to respect the teachings of wise and elderly persons. Do not arrogate to yourself that you know every thing; That no one need teach you that you are the master of your life and that you need not care for what others say. This kind of attitude is the sure way to downfall, misery and ultimately Hell. Be humble, subdue your arrogance, understand that the elders, wise and learned men are your well-wishers. They do not have any self interest in teaching you this path of Virtue. It is for your welfare, your benefit and your happiness.

They have already achieved these and do not crave for any thing. They want to see that mankind is virtuous and happy. A happy world is their motto.

I shall close this lecture with the benediction to all of you that God may give you wisdom to practice Dharma, so that you will become better persons and lead happy lives.

23-11-92

P A R I M E L L A

Sanatana dharma has prescribed four desirable objectives for the human being. They are called चतुर्विध पुरुषार्थः (four way human desires) They are :- Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Every one will strive to achieve any one or more of these पुरुषार्थ. If we have to name which is the greatest of these four, naturally the answer is "मोक्षा" meaning salvation. i. e. The ultimate merger of the self with God. आत्म with परमात्म. Therefore, undoubtedly, it is Moksha which man should always covet. The sages have said :-

इह खलु धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाख्येषु चतुर्षु पुरुषार्थेषु मोक्ष एव परम पुरुषार्थः :

What is so great about moksha that it is considered to be the greatest objective one should attain ? It is because, when one attains moksha, he has no rebirth. He is freed from the shackles of birth and death and merges in Paramatma. The other three purusharthas cannot grant this "No rebirth" boon.

नच पुनरावर्तते इति श्रुतेः :

One may ask, what does it matter if we are reborn. Every birth brings along with itself pleasures and sorrows. As long as man continues to be reborn, he cannot escape suffering these miseries. But, if he wants to free himself from this vicious circle, the surest way is not to be reborn at all (जन्म राहित्य) This Janma Rahitya is MOKSHA.

Therefore, the most desirable and laudable objective for man is Moksha. He should constantly pray and beg God to grant him moksha. But the normal human being has not evolved to that highest of spiritual attainment. That being so, though man has an innate desire for moksha, his conduct is not conducive for the attainment of the same. When they pray to God, the childless ask for children, students for success in the Examinations; he who has passed, seeks a job; those who have jobs, request for promotion etc. etc. But he who prays for moksha is rare. If there is any one such man, he is a gem and deserves respect. This is so because each one behaves according to his accumulated past virtues or sins. It is his past which dictates his present conduct and mental set up.

If one were to crave for moksha, he must certainly be a highly evolved soul (of good samskara). Such a person will be free from any worldly desire. Sankara says in this connection :-

तदैराग्यम् जुगुप्साया दर्शनं श्रवणादिभिः देहादि ब्रह्म पश्यन्ते ह्य नित्ये भोग्यवस्तुनि :

His freedom from desire will be of such a high order that starting from his own body upto Brahma, the creator, he will have no craving. He will hate and discard every earthly possession. If we can find such a person, he is on the sure way to Moksha. But what is the status of a common man? This is aptly summarised in the following verse :-

यथा व्याल गलस्थोपि भेको दंशा नपेक्षते तथा कालहिनाग्रस्तः जीवो भोगा नशाश्वतान्

The illustration is that of a frog captured by the serpent and about to be devoured. From the very mouth of the snake, the frog, seeing an insect tries to capture and eat it, unmindful of its own imminent death. The vice of desire doesn't leave it, even at the point of death. The avarice of man is exactly like that. Even when he is sure to meet with his death, when he is in the clutches of the snake of death, greed to possess something does not leave him. A person of such mental attributes cannot easily transform himself to the higher state of "Free from desire" It is difficult, but not impossible.

Can we then say that since attainment of such a high state of evolution is difficult, man has no alternative ? No. There is and that alternative is to practice the first virtue : DHARMA. This should certainly be coveted by you and practiced. You can't ignore it or say I do not want it. Whatever be your profession, whatever be your status in life, leading a virtuous life (धर्मचरणम्) is a must for you. The greatness of Dharma is extolled in the Veda, as follows :-

धर्मो विश्वस्य जगतः प्रतिष्ठा, लोके धर्मिष्ठम् प्रजा उपसर्पन्ति धर्मेण पाप मपनुदति

The very foundation for this universe is Dharma. By universe, we do not mean, the walls, trees etc. It is the human being, which is referred to. If man has to live happily, he needs proper food. Proper food comes if crops are raised in time. If crops are to come up in time, rain is needed. It will rain properly and in time, only if Dharma is practiced alround. How does rain depend on Dharma ? The Veda says -

अग्नौ प्रास्ताहुतिः सम्यगादित्यमुपतिष्ठते आदित्याज्जायते वृष्टिः वृष्टेरन्नं ततः प्रजा :

During homa, when offering of ghee etc. is put in the holy fire and gets burnt, the offering reaches the sun. The sun delivers rain in return. The water in the ocean evaporates due to sun's rays and having formed clouds, the accumulation of water is returned to us due to sun's action. This is the physical reaction. Therefore, if we desire rain in time, we must propitiate Sun God. When he is pleased, he grants us rains.

Therefore, when it is said धर्मो विश्वस्य जगतः प्रतिष्ठा, it means : scrupulous performance of Dharma pleases the Almighty and he grants rain etc. properly and in time. This enables us to live happily. Keeping this cycle in view, our great Sages, have advised us to be virtuous always. No one should avoid it. No one should discard it. No one should say that it is impossible for him to follow Dharma.

The next question is what is Dharma? Is construction of temples, upholding of Dharma. No; Because such costly actions cannot be done by everyone. So a common man must have a way of performing dharma. It is said :-

अर्था नस्युर्यदि विजहिमो धर्मं मधैक साध्यम् कायकलेदौ : कति कति विघस्तावनीयो न धर्म :

You do not have money. So you are not able to do such dharmic actions, which can be done only with money. Do not worry. It is possible to practice dharma, by various types of bodily labour. For example, if you can't build a temple, go and worship God in the temple built by some one. Go every day and devotedly pray, at least for few minutes. Can't you do this? Is there any difficulty in doing this? You don't need money. Spend your spare time in this activity, instead of wasting it in useless talk or in seeing useless pictures. Therefore, the poor need not at all worry.

In the Mahabharatha, Dharma Raja asks Bheeshma को धर्म : सर्व धर्माणां भवत : परमो मत : ? "O Grand father, please tell us which is the highest type of Dharma". Bheeshma replies :

एष मे सर्वधर्माणां धर्मोऽधिकतमो मत : यद्भक्त्या पुण्डरीकाक्षं स्तवैरर्चयन्नरः सदा :

I consider reciting the sacred names of the Lord to be the highest form of Dharma. When there are so many types of rituals ; Yagnas, Yagas, Homas, Japas, Tapas etc. why did Bheeshma Pitamaha prescribe the mere recitation of God's name to be the highest form of Devotion ? Acharya Sankara has analysed this and says :-

नमः शिवाय मंत्रोद्यं वागेषा वशवर्तिनी
अहो, मोहस्य माहात्म्यम्, नरकं येनपश्यति

The tongue is under our control. The name of God is not difficult to utter. Be it नमः शिवाय or राम, राम it is not complex. Then why should one neglect this, encaptured by desires and greed. The temptation is so great that you don't see that you are being led to Hell. When recitation of God's name is so easy and the tongue, the instrument of recitation is under your control, why don't you activate that tongue and be blessed.

I bless you all and pray to God that He gives you the good sense to be regular in your prayers to Him and to lead virtuous and happy lives.

15-11-92.

YADAGIRI GUTTA

When practice of virtue by mankind declines and evil is on the ascendent, God manifests himself in the shape of an Avatar and descends on earth, to punish evil and uphold Dharma. The two famous slokas "यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य" and "परित्राणाय साधूनां" of the Bhagavad Gita, reveal this truth to us. Decline of Dharma connotes: Abandonment of the path of virtue by the people, lack of faith that sin will beget punishment. The nature of Avatar which God assumes will depend on the purpose and circumstances of the time. Of the ten avatars, Nrisimha Avatar is the fourth one.

In this Yadagiri Gutta is situated one of the famous shrines for Lord Narasimha. What are the unique features of Narasimha Avatar?

Firstly, it gives us an example of the saying :-

भक्त्या तुष्यति केवलं ; न तु गुणैः भक्तिं प्रियो माधवः

It does not need wealth, older age or any other such attributes to propitiate God. Absolute Devotion is the only thing He expects from his Bhaktas. In the story of Nrisimha Avatara, it is Prahlada, the young lad who steadfastly stuck to the chanting of Hari's name and thus won his benediction. The Lord saves him from all dangers and death. There is no age restriction to be a steadfast devotee of the Lord.

Secondly, the Avatar declares that God is Omnipresent. Hiranya Kasipu, the king and father of Prahlada challenges his son to show him the God in a stone pillar, if God really existed every where in the universe. Prahlad tells him that God does exist even in the Pillar and his prayer is answered by God directly, by emerging Himself out of the Pillar when the pillar is kicked by Hiranya Kasipu. Thus the Lord establishes His Omnipresence. What is to be noted here is that the test is not for Prahlad, but for the theory of the omnipresence of God.

Thirdly, the story teaches us never to fail to have abounding faith in God. It is that stead-fast faith, sincerity and devotion, which stood by Prahlada and saved him, in every difficult situation. We should, therefore, never lose faith in the efficacy of devotion and worship. It is the avowed policy of God to rescue his devoted worshippers. He will never let them down.

May God bless you all and give you wisdom to tread on virtuous path, to have unfailing faith in God and his munificence and to worship him daily, with sincerity and devotion.

21-11-92

BHADRACHALAM

We, Indians, are firm believers in the theory, that there is a superhuman divine force, otherwise called as God who is responsible for the creation and sustenance of this universe. He dispenses justice, by way of happiness for good deeds and suffering for evil. It is for these reasons that we adore and worship God. The ancients have said :-

ते न विना तृणमपि न चलति

Even a blade of grass does not move without His nod. He, therefore, assumes various forms and descends on earth from time to time, to save mankind from evil. The form He assumes varies according to the circumstances and the need of the time. But uplifting of Dharma is the purpose of every Avatar.

Lord reveals in the Bhagvad Geeta

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्

परित्राणाय सधूनां विनाशायच दुष्कृतां
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे.

In every avatar, it is God's avowed purpose to destroy evil doers and protect virtuous people. The avatar of Rama is one such form.

Rama was born the son of King Dasartha and his Queen Kowsalya, in the Treta yuga (त्रेता युग), second in the cycle of four yugas. In this illustrious avatar, He killed the most wicked Ravana and other demons; gave full protection to venerable sages like Viswamitra; thus became the greatest benefactor of mankind.

In the Ramayana, the life history of Ram, Valmiki, the great sage and author says :

रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः :

Meaning : Rama is the Embodiment of Dharma itself. Any other description of that God would be too small. The virtue of Dharma became personified in the Avatar of Rama. The story of Rama is embodied in the epic Ramayana. The unique character of Sri Rama is explained in the following verse :-

यांति न्नाय प्रवृत्तस्य तिर्येचोपि सहायताम्
अपधान्तु गच्छन्तं सोदरोपि विमुञ्चति =

The lesson pointed out here has to be learnt from Ramayana only.

There are two types of human beings in this world. Those, who are virtuous, truthful and wedded to justice and integrity of the highest order. The second type who are the opposite; ill-behaved, unjust, cruel and sinful. To know the distinction between these two types, one is directed to refer to the Ramayana. Sri Ramachandra belonged to the first category.

As mentioned earlier, Sri Ram is the embodiment of DHARMA. He did not utter the word "Adharma" even in his dream. Injustice, Immorality and lack of truthfulness never went near him. For such a divine personolity, an occasion came where he had to fight a war, with Ravan. He did not get any army from Ayodhya. Four legged animals like monkeys rushed to his rescue. Why ? Because of his virtuous conduct. An example of even petty animals coming to the aid of people wedded to Dharma is the story of Rama.

On the other hand, Ravana, who was EVIL-personified, who captured Sita Mata and who tortured and harassed the Great Rishis and Sages, was deverted by his own brother, Vibhishana. This is the difference.

The virtuous is helped by even four legged animals; the wicked are shunned by their closest relatives. This is the contrast between Dharma and Evil. We should never forget this lesson. Then only, our reading Ramayana becomes purposeful; there is sense in constructing temples in His honour. Then only our worshipping of Rama will be rewarded. If

we act otherwise, construct temples for Rama, worship Rama, hear the stories of Rama; but remain away from virtue and truthfulness. God cannot be pleased and your worship will be in vain.

Lord Sri Rama Chandra will never favour the wicked, unjust and cruel people; will never patronize Adharma. He remains at the beck and call of the virtuous and sincerely devoted people who have placed their unreserved faith in Him. That God in human form has tread this holy earth of Bharata Bhumi. This is a land sanctified by the foot-steps of such noble and saintly persons. We are a nation of people which believes that the earth is sanctified by the mere foot-steps of the holy cow. Kalidasa says :-

तस्याः खुरन्त्यास पवित्र पांसु अपांसुलानां धुरि कीर्तनीया
मार्गे मनुष्येश्वर धर्मपत्नी ध्रुवेरिवार्थं स्मृतिस्त्वगच्छत्

The sand of the kingdom of Maharaja Dilip was sanctified by the foot-prints of the Holy Cow Nandini. If the land could be so sanctified by the mere foot-prints of the holy cow, then what to speak of the same land on which the Living God Sri Ramachandra tread ? This is the reason why the entire world considers that to be born in Bharat is one's greatest luck.

Other countries of the world are mere seekers of Materialistic Pleasures, as opposed to us who are predominantly Spiritualistic in outlook. To take birth in this great land and to tread on this sacred soil is one's greatest fortune. This can only be the result of the accumulated virtue of your previous births. Thus you have the great fortune of worshipping Sri Ramachandra, who is Virtuous Behaviour Personified. सर्वदा पुरोत्तम. A view of the Lord is a feast for the eyes. There is nothing more or better one can crave for, in this world.

There are many holy places devoted to Rama's temples. This Bhadrachalam is one of the foremost among them. The Lord has manifested himself in the name of Sita Ramachandra in this temple to bless the devoted and give succour to the needy. It gives me great pleasure to have come to this sacred place and have a darshan of the Lord.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL !

